

St. Luke's Nurses Honor Guard Memorializes Nurses for Lives Spent in Service to Others

By Sam Kennedy

St. Luke's is first in the Lehigh Valley to form a Nurse Honor Guard to recognize the men and women who dedicated their lives to nursing.

It's like a 21-gun salute at a funeral – but to honor the quiet heroism of nurses.

Several years ago, Denise Snyder was touched by the stirring Nightingale Tribute performed at a fellow nursing colleague's memorial service, who died after a long battle with breast cancer.

"I remember to this day how it resonated with me and its importance for any and all nurses to receive this beautiful service," recalls Snyder, a nurse at St. Luke's Carbon Campus. Inspired by that touching experience, she set out to develop the St. Luke's Nurses Honor Guard to honor those who have dedicated their lives to the nursing profession and given so much to serve their community.

Among the services now offered free of charge by the St. Luke's Nurses Honor Guard:

The Nightingale Tribute – Known as the "Lady with the Lamp," Florence Nightingale saved many wounded soldiers during the Crimean War with her pioneering nursing work. In many ways, she laid the foundation for professional nursing. During the services, a member of the Honor Guard reads the Nightingale Pledge and a nursing sonnet, then places the rose while saying the nurse's name and, "We honor you this day and give you a white rose to symbolize our honor and appreciation for being our nursing colleague."

Honorary Pallbearers – The Honor Guard may be requested to attend the visitation and/or funeral services to serve as honorary pallbearers.

Casket Honor Guard – The Honor Guard may be posted at the head of the casket, standing silently to give their last respects.

Final Call to Duty – The Final Call to Duty may be performed during the services or at the gravesite. During the Final Call to Duty, the Nightingale Lamp is lit in the nurse's honor, and the nurse's name is called out as a request to report to duty. After the third and final call, and with no response, the nurse is announced as retired and the lamp's flame is extinguished.

"This is one of the greatest community services I have been involved with, and we are most honored that it has St. Luke's University Health Network representation," Snyder says. "It brings their career in nursing full circle. A career in nursing starts by the honor we receive at the time of our capping or pinning at our nursing school graduation. It stays with us throughout our nursing career until the end, when the honor guard performs the final call to duty, which is unanswered. They are then relieved of their nursing duty to rest in peace."

Last April, Snyder launched the pilot with the support of Marjorie Federanich, St. Luke's Carbon Auxiliary President, and John Nespoli, President of the St. Luke's University Health Network's Lehighton and Carbon campuses.

"Being able to do this for our nurses has truly become a passion of mine," Snyder said. And, as a result of that passion, the St. Luke's University Health Network has become the first in the Lehigh Valley to offer the Honor Presentation at funerals or memorial services.

The program gained exposure and momentum. In June, St. Luke's Home Health and Hospice President Lisa Giovanni attended and was moved by the service. Giovanni and David Gibson, Vice President of Patient Care Services at the Lehighton and Miners campuses, encouraged Snyder to present about the Nurses Honor Guard during the September meeting of the Network Nursing Executive Council. The presentation was well received and the plan to move forward with network-wide participation was enacted and realized.

A goal of this program is to have a team of Nurses Honor Guard volunteers in place at each campus within the St. Luke's University Health Network. The program has accomplished this with a chairperson at each of the 14 St. Luke's campuses and 55 total volunteers across the network.

"This allows us to cover a very large area and give us availability and manpower to attend the funeral services of as many fallen colleagues as possible," Snyder says. "Any nurse is eligible to receive the service from the St. Luke's Nurses Honor Guard no matter where they were employed. It is nurses honoring nurses."

The St. Luke's Nurses Honor Guard currently serves Lehigh, Luzerne, Northampton, Berks, Bucks, Carbon, Montgomery, Monroe and Schuylkill counties in Pennsylvania, and Warren and Hunterdon counties in New Jersey.

To arrange for a tribute by the St. Luke's Nurses Honor Guard, please call 1-866-STLUKES (785-8537) Option 4, then Option 1, and leave a message or email mystlukes@sluhn.org.

Photo caption: St. Luke's Honor Guard honors a sister in nursing with the Nightingale Tribute. From left: Eileen Wan, BSN, RN; Lynn Birney, CRNP; Dana Carl, BSN, RN; Denise M. Snyder, BSN, RN.

Winter Commencement 2023

By NCC

BETHLEHEM - Northampton Community College is hosting its annual Winter Commencement ceremony on Saturday, January 28, at 11 a.m., at the Spartan Center located on the Bethlehem Campus on Green Pond Road.

Kassie Hilgert, ArtsQuest President & CEO, will be the featured commencement speaker.

More than 200 students from across the region will graduate with all the pomp and circumstance they have earned, making this a great photo and video opportunity!

NCC's newest President, Dr. David A. Ruth, will share several student success stories during his remarks. The pride and joy are evident throughout the ceremony.

If you would like to cover the event or have any questions, please contact Mrossimino@northampton.edu or 610-573-0202.



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